

Living your Life Worthy of the Gospel of Christ

Philippians 1:27-30

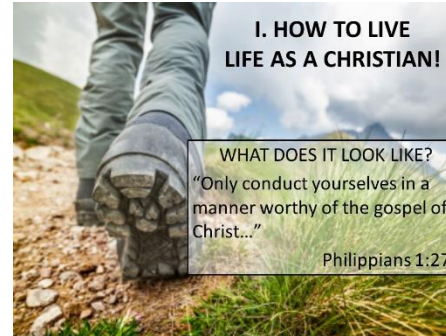
Online Sermon:

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How very sad it is that those who find the Treasure and Pearl in the field and become born again later choose envy, coveting, and self pleasure as their guiding lights!

From a prison in Rome Apostle Paul told the church of Philippi that one of their top priorities was to conduct themselves in “a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” When one first passes from death to life it is easy to meditate on God’s word, pray intensely, feed the poor, and belt out praise from the top of one’s lungs. Over the passage of time way too often the believer forgets the infinite distance between the depths of their depravity and the grace of their salvation and chooses to chase after the trinkets of temporary pleasure in this world instead of the Pearl and Treasure who found and sanctified them at the price of His very life! Paul warned the church of Philippi of the dangers of

coveting citizenship of the “the self-consciously prideful, elitist little Roman colony” in which they lived.¹ There were only “five cities in Macedonia granted the ius-Italicum status”² in which its citizens were governed by Romans laws and were exempt from direct taxation. While Paul was willing to



“exercise his rights of citizenship in appealing to Caesar”³ he did not do so to enjoy “the personal patronage and benefactions of lord Caesar” but to be imprisoned to advance the Gospel message by

bowing his knee to the “one who alone is Kyrios” of all!⁴ While Paul believed “everyone to be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1) this did not extend to worshipping the emperor or Rome’s many gods. “Here Paul challenges his beloved Philippians with a “counter-citizenship whose capital and seat of power are not earthly but heavenly, whose guarantor is not Nero but Christ.”⁵ If they were to be intensely

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 66.

² Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 353–354.

³ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Philippians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 6.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 66.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 66.

proud of any privileges⁶ this was not to be found in being citizens of Philippi but citizens of heaven (3:20)!⁷

To live a life worthy of the Gospel is to constantly surrender one's thoughts, words, and deeds to Christ and strive to abound more in knowledge and depth of insight so that one might "discern what is best" and through the Spirit live a "pure and blameless life for the day of Christ" (1:9).

It is precisely by being united in this goal to be holy that the Philippians will "shine like stars in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation (2:15)."⁸

Reflection. As Christians we have every spiritual blessing in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Luke 12:48 Jesus states, "for everyone who has been given much, much more will be demanded; and from the one entrusted with much, much more will be asked." When you examine your goals, words, deeds, and actions can you honestly say your underlying motive in life is to please the Lord? Do you find yourself imitating the world

⁶ Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 91.

⁷ Robert Rainy, "[The Epistle to the Philippians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor's Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 129.

⁸ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 95.

around you and is your heart's desire to obtain the worldly pleasures of money, fame, and power? Do you live considering the eternity God has placed in your heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11)?

Standing Firm in One Spirit

Whether Paul was freed from prison or remained afar and was eventually executed, to "move the mission forward"⁹ Paul gave the Philippians three ways in which they could live in a manner worthy of



the Gospel. First, the Philippians are to "stand firm in the one Spirit." Knowing that the Philippians lived in a preferred, retired military destination Paul rightly used the following metaphor: a soldier in battle standing their ground despite fierce opposition.¹⁰

Though the Philippians were vastly outnumbered and faced intense opposition both within and outside the walls of the church,¹¹ they were not to "yield a single inch of ground no matter what their adversaries

⁹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 77.

¹⁰ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 96.

¹¹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 78.

pressed against them!”¹² Such an immovable stance can only be obtained by standing firm, unified in “one spirit, and of one mind.”¹³

As Paul told Euodia and Syntyche unified in fellowship inside the church is only attainable through the Holy Spirit “who has incorporated them into the church, regenerated them into new life, and indwells them in the fullness of divine power.”¹⁴ This does not mean that unity is attainable without human effort, for such a precious gift¹⁵ must be received to be effective!

This brings us to the second way the Philippians were to live a life worthy of the Gospel and that was by “striving together with one accord for the faith of the Gospel.” Again, Paul uses a military image of “soldiers fighting side by side as one person.”¹⁶ Since the Christians refused to bow to the emperor or worship Rome’s many gods, they faced such intense hostility that it threatened to destroy their

faith and cause sharp divisions amongst them.¹⁷ To keep this from happening Paul reminded of the truth that they were knit together by “the Holy Spirit who abided in them all”¹⁸ and empowered them to stand firm in their faith and boldly proclaim the Gospel message! As his faithful partner in proclaiming the Good News Paul implored the Philippians whether he was absent or present to make his joy complete by continuing to be a faithful partner by living as citizens of heaven while here on earth!

Reflection. It is not easy to live a life worthy of the Gospel message in a society that has so many gods. It is easy to covet money, fame, power, and the trinkets of this world and not even realize that one is doing so! What are some of the areas of your life that are in direct opposition to God’s word? Since there is no sin that others have not wrestled with and overcome, have you asked fellow believers to help you repent of your sins and get back on the righteous path? When attacked for your belief in God do you seek fellowship with other believers to help you stand your ground?

¹² G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 96.

¹³ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 77.

¹⁴ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 95.

¹⁵ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 96–97.

¹⁶ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 97.

¹⁷ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 95–96.

¹⁸ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 7.

Striving Together Without Fear

The final way Paul gave for the Philippians to live a life worthy of the Gospel was to not be frightened in any way by their opponents. Going back to his soldier metaphor Paul told



the Philippians that they were not to react to opposition like “startling horses into an uncontrollable stampede,”¹⁹ filled with terror in the presence of their enemies!²⁰ “While some will be drawn

to the to the grace of Jesus, others will not only reject Him but also deeply oppose you. We should not be surprised by hate, conflict, or persecution.”²¹ The Philippians faced at least eighteen different opponents, any of which from a human point of view were quite terrifying!²² In

¹⁹ Daniel M. Gurtner, “[Philippians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 577.

²⁰ Marvin Richardson Vincent, [Word Studies in the New Testament](#), vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 427.

²¹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 81.

²² G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 28.

prison Paul had given the Philippians an excellent example of courageous witnessing for he was “not intimidated by the most powerful soldiers in all the Roman empire”²³ nor would he act in an unworthy manner that would be shameful when witnessing in Caesar’s court (1:20)! The same courage Paul exemplified in Rome was to be imitated by his gospel partner.²⁴ “Effective ministry does not mean a ministry devoid of conflict!”²⁵ The devil will send his messengers to attack anyone who lives and preaches the Good News! By proclaiming the “message of a crucified, risen, reigning, and return King,” the Philippians were to expect this would not go over very well from the retired military people of their city who believed Caesar was lord!²⁶ “Though their opponents would try to throw them into a panic or strike terror into their hearts”²⁷ they were not to be like the “Christian gladiator anxiously awaiting the signal of life

²³ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 99.

²⁴ Paul Barnett, [Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 44.

²⁵ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 80–81.

²⁶ Gordon D. Fee, [Philippians](#), vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 79.

²⁷ Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 152–153.

or death from the fickle crowd²⁸ of Satan’s minions but instead were not to be intimidated or back down from any attack no matter how ferocious it might be!²⁹ They are citizens of heaven and fear not man for God who is sovereign³⁰ is firmly in charge of all things past, present, and future!

The Philippians are to keep their eyes fixed on Christ as they run the race to receive a crown that will last forever (1 Corinthians 9:25)³¹ with the assurance that yes even Caesar himself will one day bow to the one and only sovereign Lord of all creation!

Reflection. Have you ever been scared to tell a relative, friend, or colleague about Jesus? Have you ever been in a conversation with a group of people that are talking about the pleasures of this world, and you wanted to tell them about the Treasure you found in the field but remained silent because you knew they were not Christians? Since God is with you, ever wonder why

²⁸ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Php 1:28.

²⁹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 98.

³⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 68.

³¹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 354.

you are so afraid of what they might do to you? Is it possible that your silence was due to valuing your relationship with the people of this world more than your relationship with God?

Victory in God

The ability to stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one faith in the Gospel without being frightened for Apostle



Paul was a “two-way sign” pointing both to destruction and salvation.³² For the believer to be able to withstand fierce persecution with “meekness and without fear”³³ was a sign that that they “belonged to a different order of things,” passing from

death to live by “coming under the Lordship of Christ,”³⁴ not Caesar. Paul told the Philippians to not loose hope for though

³² Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 81.

³³ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 69.

³⁴ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 31.

many would mock, torture, and even kill them, the work of salvation that God began in the Philippians would be sustained until they go home to meet Him!³⁵ They are also to be assured that while the might of Rome made them feel helpless to defend themselves God would one day soon vindicate, save His people,³⁶ and destroy their enemies! But how does the Philippians standing firm in proclaiming the Gospel message without fear send a sign of destruction to their opponents?³⁷ From Rome's perspective would not their steadfast faith only be a sign that they were indeed worthy of persecution "and the judgement of the gods"³⁸ for not worshipping Caesar as lord?³⁹ "Whether the persecutors realize it or not"⁴⁰ the sign of their destruction had been given in the steadfast unity of the Philippians! Since not everyone is going to heaven, Roman execution of believers was far from the end of the story!⁴¹ Christ the creator and sustainer of all things seen, and unseen (Colossians 1:16) is not only the humanity's Savior but Judge!⁴²

³⁵ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 82.

³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Php 1:28.

³⁷ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 100.

³⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 101.

³⁹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 100.

The wicked will prosper for a season (Psalms 73) but the victory belongs to the Lord who judges both the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1)! "As Paul said in a different context, If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:17).⁴³

Even if the enemies of the cross did not realize this fundamental truth, that belief in Christ leads to salvation and rejection judgment and damnation, standing unified in their faith the Philippians truly shined like stars as a profound sign of both their own and their enemy's final destiny!

Reflection. Is the way you live your life both a sign of your own salvation and the world's destruction? Do you courageously believe and proclaim the truth concerning Christ with the

⁴⁰ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 100.

⁴¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 101.

⁴² Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 82.

⁴³ Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 94.

assurance that the Judge of the living and the dead will make all things right concerning those who live in a world that is His footstool? Are you so thrilled with going home to meet Jesus that temporary suffering is nothing in comparison to the glory you are about to receive in heaven?

Suffering for Christ

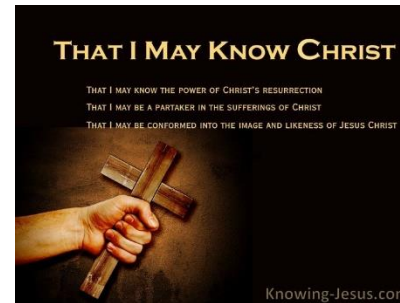
Paul finished this part of his letter by stating that God had given the Philippians two gifts to rejoice over. First, since the cross is foolishness to all who are perishing in their sin (1 Corinthians 1:18) and salvation cannot be earned but only received (Ephesians 2:8-9), belief in the way, truth, and life is a precious gift that can only be granted by the Son who atoned for one's sins! While one could easily see how becoming born again is a "magnificent blessing,"⁴⁴ why would Paul say that persecution was the second precious gift that the Philippians had received? Surely Paul was not suggesting that being ostracized by Roman society, beaten, and for many executed was a gift to be cherished? Yes, Paul saw suffering for Christ's names sake

⁴⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 69–70.

⁴⁵ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 82.

⁴⁶ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 102.

not as a burden but as a privilege⁴⁵ of the highest honor. Salvation is not obtained by suffering, but suffering is the result of salvation because the world is hostile⁴⁶ towards anyone who believes in the Lord (John 15:18-27). In this letter Paul taught



that "suffering for Christ was the way to advance the gospel (1:12), the way for Christ to be exalted (1:20), the way to experience God's grace (1:29), and the way of Christ himself, who *humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross* (2:8)!"⁴⁷ For Paul there was a "redemptive element of suffering" (Psalms 116:15; Isaiah 53:1-12) for to be "permitted to walk in the way of Christ"⁴⁸ is not only an honor but also as one stands firm in the proclaiming the Gospel one tends to perfect one's unity of fellowship with other believers and with the Lord! Though Paul and Silas had been arrested, stripped, and severely flogged (Acts 16:19-24),⁴⁹ and though Paul now faced possible execution in Caesars court for proclaiming the Good News, later in his letter he told the Philippians why he agreed to suffer for Christ's names sake, "I

⁴⁷ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 104.

⁴⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 70.

⁴⁹ Frank Thielman, [Philippians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 95.

want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, attaining the resurrection of the dead” (3:10-12). Salvation and suffering for Paul were gifts of grace that were “essential to discipleship, and perseverance”⁵⁰ By standing firm in their belief in the Lord Paul told the Philippians they would have a powerful witness that Rome could not ignore!

The Christian martyrs witness was so powerful that later under Emperor Constantine⁵¹ belief in Jesus became the official religion of the Roman Empire! This is why Karl Barth rightly stated, “the grace of being permitted to believe in Christ is surpassed by the grace of being permitted to suffer for Him.”⁵²

Reflection. While it is easy to view salvation as an amazing miracle granted to us by Christ, like Paul are you able to see persecution also as a gift and privilege beyond what words can express? Are you willing to stand side by side with your fellow Christians and not move a single inch even when others are persecuting you just because you believe in Christ?

⁵⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 71.

⁵¹ Paul Barnett, [Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 45.

Conclusion

In the following sermon Apostle Paul answered the question of how to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. All of us have but one life to live and are thoughts, words, and deeds matter to a holy God! Since He who knit us in our mother’s womb is indivisibly present everywhere one cannot please God



by putting on our “pretend holiness” mask for Sunday church service while wearing our worldly mask the rest of the week! God wants us to be like the Philippians and always let our light shine like stars in the sky. For our witness to be effective it must be genuine! To accomplish this, we must not only rejoice in the gift of our salvation but also in the privilege of suffering for His name’s sake. The more we live for Christ the more we invite persecution by those in this world that hate the Light because Christ exposes their evil deeds. In the face of tremendous opposition from a world that believes only in the god of self, Paul says we are to stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith in the Gospel. We are not to be afraid of those

⁵² R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 70.

who oppose us but instead rejoice that we are counted worthy to witness in such a profound manner. It is through our courage in adversity that the world finds both the sign of the beauty and power of our salvation but also the sign of their eventual destruction if they don't turn from their evil ways. While we are unlikely to be called to be a martyr like in the Romans times of Paul's day, whether it be the shedding of our blood, public estrangement, or some other kind of persecution our immovable faith and joy in the Lord still plants seeds of righteousness in many of even the most vile and lost souls that we meet!