

Philippians

Part 7 – Living Worthy of the Gospel

Philippians 1:27-30

The gospel binds us together and is essential to our unity in Christ. This becomes all the more necessary and evident in the midst of opposition and suffering.

Paul, now done relieving them of their anxieties about him, turns his attention toward encouraging and exhorting the Philippian church and unity in the gospel is his main point.



Main Idea: Unity in the gospel is crucial as we seek to share the good news of Jesus and suffer for His sake.

Citizenship worthy of the gospel of Christ (v. 27)

- “Whatever happens,” “above all,” “at all costs”
 - It’s as if Paul is saying, “Let nothing distract you from this main point.”
- “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 3:20, Eph. 2:19-22, Col. 3:11)
 - “Only continue to exercise your citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (William Hendriksen, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, p. 85).
 - “live a life consistent with the gospel” or “live a life consistent with your heavenly citizenship”
 - Where is your citizenship?
 - Roman citizenship was very valuable.
 - You could be born into it, pay for it, or serve in the military for it.
 - Grace makes us citizens of another country.
 - Our citizenship is from heaven and our reference point is Christ.
 - Our privileges and responsibilities are derived from that citizenship.
 - The gospel must be at the center of our unity.
 - Our unity is not in our earthly citizenship.
- “whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit”
 - Growth in Christ and fighting for the gospel is not dependent on the presence of any one man, not even the great Paul. No, the church moves forward in the gospel together as the body of Christ.
- “that you are standing firm in one spirit” (Eph. 6:13)
 - Standing firm is not a solo endeavor. To stand firm in Christ means that you are part of a community. No one person outside of Jesus has the power to stand on their own. We need the community of God’s people. We must be united in the gospel by the same Spirit.
- “one mind” (Phil. 2:2)
 - Or “as one man” – this is a tight kind of unity.
 - “There is no agreement (possible) unless there is agreement as to what constitutes the gospel” (J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, p. 96-97).

Side by side for the gospel of Christ (vv. 27-28)

- “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,”
 - “like gladiators against a common foe” (William Hendriksen, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, p. 85)
 - The image of a phalanx
 - This is not just a personal fight, but involves the whole community.
 - In a phalanx the men guarded on another. They weren’t fighting solo, they fought together, selflessly, to protect and support the others in their troop.
 - Guard your neighbor because we are in the fight together.
 - Membership vows bind us together in the gospel.
 - Our need for one another.

- Our individual efforts leave each one of us vulnerable. We need our brothers and sisters to protect us.
- That's why it's dangerous to have the high and lofty preacher or the solo evangelist or the musician who goes out on the road alone.
 - A reason for Presbyterianism
- *"striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents."*
 - The striving or struggle or fight is on two fronts. We fight against foes (v. 28) and for the faith (v. 27).
 - We're not striving for someone or against someone else; we are striving for the faith of the gospel.
 - "The Christian way is to refuse retaliation and to live such exemplary lives that our persecutors not only become ashamed of their conduct but want to become believers themselves" (Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, p. 106).
 - It's not about vengeance (Rom. 12:19-21).
 - There is an offensive as well as defensive mindset here. Are we actively contending for the faith or are we just reacting?
 - *"frightened"* like "horses startled into a panic" (Sinclair Ferguson, *Let's Study Philippians*, p. 35)
 - Fear often stops us from actively pressing forward the gospel.
 - Fear often stops us from truly loving – God, our neighbors and our enemies.
 - Our rootedness in Christ grants us His courage (Mark 8:35, Phil. 1:21).
 - Why were there opponents?
 - Because the Christians were citizens of another kingdom. Those who reject the King reject His kingdom as well.
 - Who were these "opponents"?
 - Philippians 2:15 There were people who were part of "a crooked and twisted generation" (Phil. 2:5). Paul also calls them dogs, evildoers and "those who mutilate the flesh" (Phil. 3:2). They "walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19).
 - Our opponents are not flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12).
- *"This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God."*
 - The sovereign hand of God brings about the destruction of those opposed to Him and the salvation of those who are for Him (Phil. 1:6).
- *"and that from God"* The strength to stand firm, to strive side by side and to not be frightened comes from God and is rooted in the salvation He supplies.

Suffering for the gospel of Christ (vv. 29-30)

- *"For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ"*
 - These are gifts given to the believer to be used for the honor and glory of Christ.
- *"you should not only believe in him"*
 - Belief is a gift granted to us by God. (Eph. 2:8)
- *"suffer for his sake"*
 - Suffering is a gift granted to us by God.
 - Suffering for the sake of Christ is no accident. God is in control.
 - Suffering for Christ is a kind of assurance for the believer.
 - Opposition against believers actually shows forth their salvation and suffering for Christ's sake shows His favor.
 - This goes against our culture which equates God's blessing with pleasant circumstances. That is a truncated understanding of God's blessing.
 - Suffering is not fun or happy, but ultimately Genesis 50:20 holds (Rom. 5:3b-5, 8:16-17)
 - We are called to be unified, side by side, in suffering for the gospel as well.
- *"engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have".*
 - The Philippian church is not alone in suffering. Paul suffers with them and has suffered like them already. He sits on the ash heap with them.
 - "The conflict is the same because at the bottom the arch-enemy is the same!" (William Hendriksen, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, p. 91).
 - Though we cannot fully relate, we should seek to bear with our suffering brothers and sisters who are being persecuted and killed all over the world. We should be mindful of them in prayer.