

## ***A LIFE WORTHY OF CHRIST*** **Philippians 1:27-30**

### **(Read Philippians 1:27-30)**

**Intro:** As we close out this first chapter of Philippians, Paul admonishes us with, *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ* Philippians 1:27a. Peterson renders it this way, *Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ.* Philippians 1:27 (The Message)

What does that look like? Commentators point out that the Greek word that Paul used here in the original language, which is translated “manner of life” means literally, “to live as a citizen.” Paul told the Philippians to be good, patriotic citizens of the kingdom of God. He was writing from Rome – the capital and epicenter of the Roman Empire. He was there in Rome, where citizenship really meant something, because, as a Roman citizen his right was to have an audience with the Roman emperor, Nero. The idea of citizenship also would also resonate with the Philippians since they were part of a patriotic Roman enclave—a Roman Colony to be specific. They knew the concept of citizenship. But he was calling them to a higher citizenship – he was calling them to be worthy of their citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

Those who have experienced God’s mercy must live up to the high calling and Paul is holding them accountable in this. This is what loving pastors do – they hold their people accountable. This is what loving Christ Followers do, they hold their pastors accountable. Actually, it’s what Christ Followers do, they hold one another accountable, it’s hugely important in the body of Christ.

With that in mind let’s take a look at this citizenship and what it means to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ? Here are several things: First . . .

### **Christ Followers standing firm**

- Regardless of where Paul was, in Rome or if he came for a visit, he wanted to know the Philippians were . . . *standing firm in one spirit*, Philippians 1:27b. In this Roman Colony full of retired Imperial Army veterans, this may have conjured the visual in a mind’s eye of a phalanx of soldiers, shoulder to shoulder, with shields extended in a protective wall. It was a picture of strength. But it was a greater strength than a Roman legion because it didn’t come from arms or physical might, but from unity in the Spirit of God.
- This requires that the Christ Followers in the Philippian Church – and, really, in the Church anywhere, to be unified. He goes on, Christ Followers must be . . . *with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*, Philippians 1:27c. We need a lot more unity in the Church. I know that God’s heart breaks at the discord in the people who call themselves his followers.
- Here is what we need to do about this ABC – let it be known of us, here, in this group of God’s Called Out Ones (the very definition of church) that WE are unified and we stand unified with all Christ Followers who share the faith of the Gospel. And let’s strive side by side for that Gospel. A church united is worthy of Christ – a church divided is Satan’s plan. We need to be STRIVING TOGETHER.
- When we’re unified, it’s more likely we will be . . .

### **Christ Followers Who Are Unafraid**

- Our text, after finishing verse 27’s call to unity continues in verse 28 with . . . *not frightened in anything by your opponents*. Philippians 1:28a. **DON’T BE FRIGHTENED!** – the Greek here is a very vivid word picture of a frightened, stampeding herd of horses. If you’ve ever been around horses and some of you have, you have seen that, when startled, a horse throws up its head with its eyes bulging with fear and its nostrils flaring. Paul says that the faith of the Gospel gives us courage rather than fright. Barclay, in his translation of this passage, puts it this way, he says to the Philippians . . . *you are not put into fluttering alarm by any of your adversaries*. Christ Followers are not put to flight by opposition. They are not flighty at all, as a matter of fact, because they can stand firm knowing in whom strength originates. It’s a strength on which they can actually rely.
- So it’s this ABC, don’t be afraid of your opponents – not by ANYTHING they might do or say. Paul tells us, *This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.* Philippians 1:28b. You see, not only is it a demonstration of our faith when we stand firm, it’s also a confirmation that our opponents and opponents to the Gospel know they are losing. Their discouraging and taunting words only show their own fear and clear danger of destruction. David Guzik writes, “*When our spiritual enemies*

*fail to make us afraid, they have failed completely because they really have no other weapon than fear and intimidation.”* When detractors fail to make us afraid it is evidence of the solidness of our faith – so, when you are tempted to think you’ve been abandoned by God, realize instead that your suffering is a tool of God’s faithfulness.

- Speaking of suffering, a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ means . . .

### **Christ Followers Suffering**

- Let me read what Paul is saying about this, *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*, Philippians 1:29. We are not seeking suffering for the Gospel and we are desiring to suffer, but Paul is saying that for a Christ Follower suffering is a possibility.
- This is tough for American Christians. We want a path to heaven that is nice and smooth with no potholes or tripping hazards or dark woods with creepy enemies lurking behind each tree. No, we too often think being a Christ Follower is a cake walk – and we will fight to keep it that way. But ask a Christ Follower in India or in Iran or in Afghanistan what their journey is and they will tell you it comes with suffering. And I’ll tell you they can show us a few things – but they won’t because they don’t brag – they just serve Jesus with faithfulness that shames us. They are suffering for Jesus sake.
- We are blest here in the USA. No matter what we hear to the contrary – we have an easy time of it and because of that we have become soft and complacent and entitled. So, what do we do, go and drum up some suffering? NO! That’s crazy – but let’s not take our lack of suffering for granted and build our spiritual muscles to be ready for the privilege it is to suffer of the sake of Christ. If you believe in him, then be ready to suffer for him. With a smile on your face.
- And finally, a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ is . . .

### **Christ Followers Engaged in the Work**

- Philippians has been called The Epistle of Joy, and even as Paul has been talking about standing firm in the face of opposition and suffering for the sake of Christ, there has been an undercurrent of joy in spite of it. And there is a promise in that. Remember, Paul is in prison in Rome. He’s in chains and, it’s quite likely he is actually chained to an elite Roman soldier. Not a happy situation, right? Wrong! Paul is full of joy as he writes to his favorite bunch of Christ Followers.
- Some of this joy is that he knows they will be . . . *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*. Philippians 1:30. And with joy at that. Here is his thinking: if the Philippians had Paul’s kind of conflict, they could also have Paul’s kind of joy and fruitfulness in the midst of it – this is what James meant when he wrote, *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*. James 1:2-4. Weird, right? Well, kinda – but’s a holy weird.

**Conclusion:** Barclay puts it this way as he summarizes our text, and the first chapter: *“What does Paul expect from them? He expects them to stand fast. The world is full of Christians on the retreat, who, when things grow difficult, play down their Christianity. The true Christian stands fast, unashamed in any company. He expects unity; they are to be bound together in one spirit like a band of brothers. Let the world quarrel; Christians must be one. He expects a certain unconquerability. Often evil seems invincible; but the Christian must never abandon hope or give up the struggle. He expects a cool, calm courage. In times of crisis others may be nervous and afraid; the Christian will be still serene, master of himself and of the situation.”*

That, ABC, is what a life worthy of Christ is. Next week, as we move into chapter 2 we will take is step farther and see what it takes to actually, Be Like Jesus. Amen.