

Philippians 1:27-30 — Live As Citizens Of The Kingdom

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If you are connecting with us for the first time online, my name is Kurt. I am one of the Pastors at CrossWinds. I want to say a special good morning to our Spencer campus. It is connecting with our Spirit Lake campus for this morning's study of God's Word. It is a privilege to fill in for Pastor Jordan this morning. I also want to give a special welcome to our Windom extension site in Minnesota. It is great to have you connected with us as well.

Do you remember what happened when the teacher left the room in elementary school? Remember how the room turned into chaos as soon as the teacher walked out? Maybe you remember something similar happening in high school when a teacher didn't show up for class. Unsupervised students in a room was an invitation to goof off.

As we turn to the book of Philippians, we find that while Paul was gone, he was concerned the same kind of irresponsible behavior was happening in the church of Philippi. Let's see what he had to say about it.

Before we read the text, let's take a moment to remember what has transpired in the letter. So far, Paul was talking about himself. He told the Philippians he was filled with joy because the gospel made progress in Rome, even though he was in prison. The guards chained to him were coming to Christ. He was filled with joy because the newly converted Christian guards were sharing the gospel throughout Caesar's own house. Nothing could stop the gospel. It was making progress in the most unexpected ways. Last week, Paul moved from talking about the joy he had from the gospel spreading in his present

circumstances to the confidence he had about the future. Paul was waiting to hear the outcome of his trial. He could be executed or set free. No matter what the future held, Paul was content. The gospel would make progress either way. If Paul was set free, he would have the opportunity to tell more people about Jesus. If Paul was executed, that was even better because he would go home to be with Jesus. It was a win-win situation. Either way, the gospel made progress.

Today, the autobiographical tone of the letter disappears. Paul turned from talking about himself and his joy to pleading with the Philippians. Paul's concern for the church in Philippi will dominate most of the remainder of the letter. In the verses we are looking at this morning, Paul talked about two concerns he had for the church — dangers from division inside the church and the danger of persecution from outside the church. Paul was concerned that the Christians in the church of Philippi were not handling those challenges well. They weren't behaving like Christians. They were misbehaving like students in a classroom when the teacher is away. Let's read the text, then see what Paul had to say.

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, 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. 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 1:27–30 (ESV)

Paul began with these words.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ... Philippians 1:27 (ESV)

These words are a summary sentence for everything else that follows. Before we study this verse, you need to know that in this portion of Philippians,

there are a number of key Greek words Paul used. In all honesty, our English translation doesn't do justice to these verses. This morning, I am going to ask for the liberty to work under the hood for a bit. We are going to look at a few of the important Greek words in these verses that add vivid color to Paul's words that is not conveyed in our translations. Let's work our way through this verse and see some of those important words.

Let's start with the first word. The word "only." In Greek, it is the word *monos*. Some translations, like the ESV that we use, translate this word by the word "only." If you want to translate the Greek word *monos* using one word, the word "only" is a good translation. Others of you that have a translation which is a paraphrase will see that word translated by a phrase in your Bibles. It is the phrase, "just one thing." What is the best way to translate the Greek word *monos*? The word "only" or the phrase "just one thing"? The phrase "just one thing" is a more accurate portrayal of what Paul was communicating.

Paul said, "There is one big issue we need to talk about in this letter. Here is the bottom line that sums everything up if we could reduce this letter to just one thing. We don't need to talk about your Christian faith, I am concerned about your Christian life. You must live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ that you claim. We can't just say we are Christians, but we need to live lives worthy of being Christians. That is the bottom line."

This is still a problem in the church today, isn't it? Many of us know the gospel in our heads but we struggle to make choices that are in line with the gospel in our lives. This is especially difficult for young adults. Young adults face

a great deal of pressure to fit in with their friends. They face peer pressure to act like their friends. If your friends watch an R-rated movie, it is difficult to leave your friends and walk away outside the theatre because watching an R-rated movie isn't what Jesus would do. If your friends pull out recreational drugs, nobody wants to be awkward and walk away, yet that is what you must do. We must not just believe the Christian faith, but we must live lives worthy of the faith. The bottom line is that is the struggle the Philippians faced. It is the same struggle we face.

I told you there were a number of important Greek words in these verses that English can't show us. As we continue in this verse, we find another one of those important words. To understand this word, we need to remember the background of Philippi that we learned a few weeks ago. Philippi was 800 miles away from Rome but it held the coveted status of being a colony of Roman. As a Roman colony, its citizens were considered Roman citizens. It housed Roman soldiers in the city to protect the region. The Philippians were very proud of their status as a Roman colony. They were incredibly patriotic, just like we are proud to be Americans. Philippi was so proud of being a Roman colony that the Philippians went out of their way to be as Roman as possible, even though they were almost a thousand miles away from Rome itself. Many of the buildings in Philippi were designed as replicas of buildings in Rome. The city was laid out in exactly the same master plan as the city of Rome. The people of the city dressed in the same clothes worn by prestigious citizens in the city of Rome. The Philippians were preoccupied with acting Roman and having their city appear to

be a miniature replica of Rome. That background is essential to know when we come to the next important Greek word.

When Paul said, “Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel.” The Greek word he used for “manner or life” is the Greek word *politeuesthai*. It means “live as worthy citizens.” Paul said, “You guys are preoccupied with living as worthy citizens of Rome. You try to dress like Romans, look like Rome, and do everything to be like Rome. Instead of occupying yourselves with living as worthy citizens of Rome, preoccupy yourselves with living as worthy citizens of the gospel. Instead of putting all your energy into living like a Roman, which is a temporary allegiance to Nero, preoccupy yourself with living a life that is worthy of the gospel which is a permanent allegiance and has Jesus as the ruler. Instead of focusing on living out the duties of your Roman citizenship, focus on living out the duties of your Christian citizenship.”

Paul brought up this theme later in this letter.

[But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... Philippians 3:20 \(ESV\)](#)

So Philippi was filled with people preoccupied with being Roman and acting Roman. Paul told the Philippians to occupy themselves with the gospel and acting as a worthy citizen of heaven.

The problem is this dual citizenship would come into conflict. Loyalty to Rome and loyalty to Jesus would sometimes not be possible at the same time. The question is, which one would win? For example, loyalty to Rome meant that once a year Roman citizens were to worship Caesar as a God. Loyalty to Jesus meant you only worshipped Jesus as God. At times, those two citizenships came

into conflict. Which one would win? Would the Philippians live in a way that was worthy of the gospel? Would they not just have their Christian faith but would live Christian lives?

The application is clear for all of us. At times, our earthly citizenship and our heavenly citizenship will also come into conflict. The question is, to which do we have higher allegiance? When our allegiance to the gospel is higher than our allegiance to this world, are we ready to suffer for not going along with the crowd?

What Paul did from this point is he showed us what it means to live as citizens of the kingdom. This applies directly to us and how we live as Christians today.

Citizens of heaven stand in unity like soldiers.

...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit... Philippians 1:27a (ESV)

Paul gave us a word picture of what it means to live as citizens of God's kingdom. This word picture is found in the phrase "standing firm in one spirit."

Standing firm is the Greek word *steko*. It was a military word used to describe the responsibility of Roman soldiers to hold their ground during battle. Remember the city of Philippi housed the Roman soldiers that kept the peace in that part of the world. The necessity of Roman soldiers holding their ground in battle was familiar to this church.



This word takes on special meaning when we study Roman military tactics. In battle, Roman soldiers put themselves side-by-side, locking shields together both in front of them and over them. The ability of Roman soldiers to stand firm and hold their ground was linked to their ability to stand together as one spirit. If someone in the line broke formation, the rest of the soldiers were liable to be destroyed. The strength of the Roman army was found by them standing firm and holding their ground by locking together and doing it with one spirit, as one unit. If they tried to operate as rogue individuals, they would be devastated by the enemy.

Paul reminded the Christians in Philippi, and he reminds us, that we are in a spiritual battle. The enemy is Satan and the world that is following him. The enemy's desire is to attack and destroy God and his children. We must not turn and run when under pressure in this world. We also must not try to resist these attacks on our own in this world. We must stand firm against the attacks of Satan by being of one spirit in the church.

Paul made a plea for unity in the church. Can you imagine what would happen to Roman soldiers if they started to fight against one another while under their protective shields? In no time, they would be destroyed. The enemy would win without much effort. In the same way, when Christians fight one another, Satan makes great progress in his mission to destroy us. As Christians, standing firm together, helping one another and refusing to fight with one another, but instead being united against our enemy, is paramount. That is the way citizens of the gospel live worthy of the gospel. Just as fighting between Roman soldiers in

battle was never allowed, fighting between Christian soldiers is not allowed. The enemy is Satan and this world, not our brothers and sisters through Jesus.

As we get further into Philippians, we find fighting in the church is a big problem for the Philippian church. When they were fighting one another, the strength of their unity was gone. Their ability to stand firm against the devil was gone. They were vulnerable.

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Philippians 4:2–3 (ESV)

What was the issue between these two women? We don't know. We do know it was not a serious theological issue. If it was an important issue, Paul would have sided with one of them and corrected the other one of them. That didn't happen. They were fighting about something of secondary importance. Maybe there was a ladies potluck. One woman forgot to send an invitation to the other woman. As a result, she got her nose out of joint. Every time they were together from that point forward, it was a cat fight.

The problem was this fight wasn't just affecting them. It was ruining the unity of the entire church and destroying the strength of their gospel unity, leaving them vulnerable to spiritual attack. Division in the church is a very dangerous thing. Paul also talked about the danger of division and the importance of unity in Philippians 2.

..complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:2–3 (ESV)

Church division and fighting was not just a constant problem in Philippi but it was also a problem in other churches, such as the church of Corinth and the church at Ephesus.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10 (ESV)

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

Just as Roman soldiers couldn't tolerate disunity because it would destroy everyone, in the same way, Christians who are citizens of heaven, with Jesus as our commanding officer, must not use our time and energy to fight one another. We must put our preferences aside and work hard to keep unity in the church for the health and protection of the church.

What causes disunity in the church?

1. Selfish ambition.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

Most of the disunity in the church comes from selfish ambition. That is promoting ourselves and our desires over the needs of others and the desires of others. Disunity in the church also comes from pride. It is thinking of yourself as more important than other people.

There is little conflict when people are more concerned about the needs of others than they are of themselves. We will cover that in more detail next week when we get to Philippians 2.

2. Undervaluing unity

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! Psalm 133:1 (ESV)

While we are on the topic of unity, I think one of the reasons unity is hard to maintain in the church is simply because we undervalue the importance of it. We forget how precious unity is in a church and how powerfully God can use the unity of his people to impact the world for the gospel. As a result, as soon as things are not according to our liking, rather than doing the hard work of working things out and extending forgiveness, too many people will simply pick up their balls and go home because they don't value unity so they won't work for unity. As a result, churches are smaller, they are weaker and less people are reached for Jesus.

Citizens of heaven work together like athletes on a team striving for a goal.

...with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... Philippians 1:27 (ESV)

Just as Paul gave us at the word picture of soldiers united together, holding their ground while in the heat of battle, now Paul gave us another word picture. That is of athletes working side by side, striving together to score the goal. The phrase "striving side by side" comes from the Greek word *synathleo*. You can hear the Greek word *athleo* in it. That is the Greek word from which we get our English word athletics. This word is a rare word that is only used twice in Scripture.



The word described the hard work and teamwork seen in athletic contests that were popular in Philippi. One of those popular athletic contests was the struggle of wrestling. Their wrestling was different from the wrestling we see

today. For us, wrestling is an individual sport. They had wrestling that was a team sport. The closest thing we have to it today is team UFC. That is not popular so most of us haven't seen team UFC battles. A modern sport that is similar might be football. That is a team sport, where everybody works hard but they need to work hard together to achieve a touchdown. In addition, football illustrates that everyone does not play the same part on the team. Team members have different gifts and different parts to play if the team is going to score. That is the way it is in the church. The church must strive together. We must work hard together to achieve the goal. Just as everyone in football does not play the same position, everyone in the church does not play the same position, but we are all working together to achieve the same goal.

What is the goal? For football, it is getting a piece of animal skin into a green grass rectangle. As Christians, our goal is the progress of faith and the gospel, that people would mature in Christ and that people would meet Christ so their lives and eternities are radically changed. I think our goal is far more important than football.

What does it mean to live as citizens worthy of heaven? It means to work together with your brothers and sisters in Christ in the same church to help the gospel make progress in this world. That is what it means to be a good citizen of heaven.

There are many applications for us from these word pictures.

1. **The Christian faith is a team faith, not just an individual faith.** Today I often hear people say, "I have Jesus and my Bible, why do I need the

church?” Paul told us that to withstand the assaults of Satan, we need to be like soldiers locked together as one spirit. If we are alone, we are vulnerable. We need one another in the church for strength in our spiritual lives. He also said that for the gospel to make progress in our community, we will do a much better job when we work together for the spread of the gospel than if we worked alone for the spread of the gospel. God has saved us and gifted us to help the gospel make progress in this world by using our different gifts and talents as we work together as a team. The Christian faith is much more of a team faith than an individual faith than most of us realize.

2. **Unity in the church is of greater value than what I want in my church.** We live in an individualistic culture. When we go through the drive-thru, we get to choose what we want. We can customize almost anything to our liking. In the church, we cannot customize the church to be just the way we want it to be. It doesn't work that way. CrossWinds isn't everything I want it to be, and it isn't everything you want it to be. How we handle things when they aren't the way we want it is important. Instead of fighting with one another, we must value unity with one another. Unity in the church is far more important than getting our preferences in the church. When we fight one another, we give Satan an opportunity to attack us, divide us, and take away the strength of our unity. Acting as citizens worthy of the kingdom of heaven means placing a very high value on our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. **There is no way to maintain unity in a static situation.** This doesn't come directly from the text, but it is a pertinent application of the text. If a church is

standing around trying to have unity, they will never have unity. The only way to maintain group unity is to have that group working together toward a common goal. When everybody is focused on that goal, people will forget about internal issues. When people have lost sight of the goal, they will fight about internal issues. When I was just beginning as a lead pastor, another pastor told me his secret of success. He told me to always have a building project. When people are focused on building a building, they won't have time for fighting one another. There is truth to what he said, although I don't agree with everything he said. As a church, our goal is not to build buildings. It is for the gospel to make progress in our community. That is our goal. Buildings are secondary. The point remains, when people are focused on a goal, they will work together. When there is not a goal, they will start fighting together.

Citizens of the kingdom are not frightened by opposition.

...and not frightened in anything by your opponents... **Philippians 1:28a (ESV)**

Paul used another rare term that the Philippians could understand. It appears only here in the New Testament. It is the Greek word for frightened. In the Greek, it refers to the panic of a startled horse that raises up on its hind feet and runs in fear. If you have been around horses, you understand how skittish horses can become at the slightest noise. This is a panicked reaction at the first sign of trouble.

Paul said, "When you have opponents who are persecuting you, imprisoning you, or making you feel like a fool because of your Christian faith, don't freak out and panic like a horse. Don't run in fear at the first sign of



trouble.”

Remember God is in charge. Nothing can happen to us unless God allows it. If God allows us to suffer for our faith, he allows it for a reason. God always has a good purpose for all of the suffering we face, even if we don't understand his wisdom. When we suffer for sharing the gospel, God promises to use our suffering as part of his plan to spread the gospel. Don't panic like a horse and freak out when you find yourself suffering for your faith. Let me show you an example of how God transformed suffering for the gospel into progress for the gospel.

Remember when Paul and Silas preached the gospel at Philippi in Acts 16? They ended up beaten with rods. They ended up thrown into the inner cell of the Philippian prison. That looks like a great place to panic like a horse. Everything looks like it is out of control. There was no reason to panic. God had everything under control. That night, Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God when God used an earthquake to open all the prison doors. He used that earthquake to lead the Philippian jailer to Christ. That jailer became one of the first Christians in the city. Even though Paul and Silas were persecuted for their faith, God had everything under control and used that persecution as part of his plan to spread the faith. The same applies to us. Don't freak out when people persecute us because of our faith in Jesus. God will use that suffering as part of his good plan to advance the gospel.

As a church, our goal is to advance the gospel in the region. As part of that goal, we invite our neighbors, co-workers and friends to church where they

can hear the good news about Jesus. Sometimes, people will laugh at us. Sometimes people will unfriend us. Sometimes people will post unkind things on social media about us. When that happens, we must not fear. Remember we are in a spiritual battle. God will use the suffering we face for speaking the gospel as part of God's good plan to spread the gospel.

If ministry is effective, expect opposition.

But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a wide door for effective ministry has opened for me — yet many oppose me. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 (ESV)

I love these verses. Their candor is refreshing. In one breath, Paul talked about the effectiveness of his ministry in the city of Corinth. In the same breath, he talked about how many people were opposing him in Corinth. Effective ministry and opposition against the gospel were happening at the same time. This reminds us effective ministry doesn't mean we won't have conflict.

We must remember that whenever we speak the gospel, a spiritual battle takes place. When the gospel is spoken, some people will be drawn to the gospel as God works in their hearts. Other people will be opposed to the gospel message because God has not softened their hearts. We must expect two reactions — either people will have hearts softened by God so they will begin to embrace Jesus when they hear about him or people will have hearts hardened against the gospel when they hear about it and they will actively work against us to oppose Jesus. Spiritually, there is no such thing as middle ground. Paul talked about this in 2 Corinthians.

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 2 Corinthians 2:15–16 (ESV)

Have you smelled a dead body? Do you remember how repulsive the smell of that body was to you? For some people, when we share the gospel, it smells to them like a dead body. They are repulsed by it because their hearts are hardened against it. That is why we should expect opposition. Others have hearts softened by God toward the gospel. When they hear the gospel message, it is refreshing. It is a message of life.

So citizens worthy of the kingdom aren't startled when they face opposition because they share the gospel. They expect opposition for sharing the gospel. That is the way it always works.

Citizens of the kingdom that stand united for the gospel are giving a two-way sign to the world.

...This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. Philippians 1:28 (ESV)

Paul gave us three word pictures of what it means to live as citizens worthy of the gospel. Next he tells us our courage in the face of gospel



opposition is a two-way sign. It is a sign to those who persecute the Christian faith that they will be destroyed. Persecuting Christians is a sign that people do not know God. They are headed for eternal destruction or they wouldn't persecute the sons and daughters of God for speaking the good news of the gospel.

On the other hand, courage in the face of persecution for living and speaking the gospel is a sign to Christians of the authenticity of their faith. It provides assurance to Christians that their relationships with God are real.

When persecution for the gospel begins, those who do not truly love Jesus will be quick to leave Jesus. It is only genuine Christians who remain faithful to Jesus when they have to suffer for speaking and claiming his name. Willingness to suffer for speaking the gospel is an encouraging sign to Christians. It is proof of the authenticity of their faith.

Citizens of the kingdom are sometimes privileged to not just believe in Christ but to suffer for the gospel like Christ.

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 (ESV)

The word “granted” in Greek is the word for grace. It was God who graciously opened the hearts of the Philippians so they were able to believe in Christ. Now Paul said God was also giving them the privilege of suffering for the gospel just like Christ. Faith in Jesus is a gracious gift of God. The opportunity to suffer for the gospel is also a gracious gift from God.

This brings us to a rarely talked about topic in the church, suffering for the gospel. Paul talked about this in Colossians in another verse that people sometimes find confusing.



Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church... Colossians 1:24 (ESV)

Paul said he was privileged to fill up what is lacking in Christ’s sufferings. What is this talking about?

This is not talking about the suffering Christ bore for our sin on the cross. Those sufferings are finished. Jesus paid for all of our sin. He experienced all the

suffering we deserved for an eternity in the lake of fire. Those sufferings are finished.

This verse is talking about the sufferings Jesus experienced and sufferings his people will experience when they proclaim the gospel of God in a world that is opposed to it. Jesus suffered at the hands of the Jewish leaders for sharing the gospel in a world that was opposed to it. Paul also suffered at the hands of the Jews for sharing the gospel in a world that was opposed to it. He was whipped five times, beaten with rods three times, and stoned one time, to name just a little of the suffering he experienced in this world simply because he spoke the good news of Jesus. If Jesus and Paul suffered for proclaiming the gospel in a world that was opposed to it, we should also expect to suffer when we proclaim the gospel in a world opposed to it. Remember that for some people, the gospel is the fragrance of life. For other people, the gospel is terribly repulsive. It is the fragrance of death.

Knowing everyone who clearly proclaims the gospel will have people opposed to them and that it is a privilege to endure suffering for speaking the gospel explains other verses in the Bible.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

When we act like Jesus and love people like Jesus in this world, we will be persecuted like Jesus in this world. Everyone who shares the gospel will experience some form of hatred and opposition for speaking it. At the same time, we will meet other people who have had their hearts prepared by God for the gospel and they will be drawn to the gospel.

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Acts 5:41 (ESV)

Here the apostles were sharing the good news of Jesus. As a result, the Jewish leadership arrested them and beat them. They considered it a privilege that they were able to share the gospel so clearly and effectively that they were beaten for doing it. Just as it is a privilege to be saved by Jesus, it is a privilege to suffer for sharing the good news of God like Jesus.

Many of us do not have this in our theology. Too many Americans have bought into a health-wealth-and-prosperity theology that says we come to Jesus so he will take away all of the suffering in our lives. We love to tell people, “Come to Jesus. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” The problem is we aren’t telling them the whole story. God does love you. He does have a wonderful plan for you. However, when you tell others the good news of Jesus, part of that plan will involve suffering for the gospel. We need to be more honest and tell people to expect that to happen. If we aren’t honest, they will question their faith when they are mocked and rejected for speaking about Jesus because they never expected that to happen.

Suffering for the gospel is a gift.

How is this suffering a gift? We need to remember suffering for the sake of the gospel is a badge of honor. It is a privilege. God does many good things in us and through us when we suffer for sharing the gospel.

1. **Suffering for the gospel gives us assurance we belong to Jesus.** We just covered this in the last verse. When suffering comes into the church, those that are not genuine Christians leave faster than cockroaches when the lights

go on. Suffering purifies the church. Genuine Christians find themselves enduring suffering for their faith because they cannot turn their backs on Jesus. As a result, they know their relationship with Jesus is authentic. It is real.

2. **Suffering for the gospel brings us closer to Jesus.** Paul talked about this in Philippians 3:10. Paul's desire was to know Christ. Paul knew that if he had the privilege of suffering for sharing the gospel, he would be drawn into a closer relationship with Christ as a result of it. The same is true for us. If we are willing to suffer for sharing the gospel, we can rest assured that in our suffering we will be drawn into a closer relationship with Christ as we share in the same type of gospel suffering experienced by Christ in this world.
3. **Suffering for the gospel perfects our usefulness for Jesus.** James talked about this in James 1. God uses trials to test our faith. Trials are intended by God to produce maturity in our faith. When we face times where the world is laughing at us because we are Christians, God's intent is to use those difficult times to mature us and make us more useful for Christ and his kingdom.
4. **Suffering for the gospel leads to eternal rewards.** When we suffer for sharing the gospel, God promises to reward us in eternity for enduring that suffering. Speaking the gospel that leads to suffering in this life will lead to great eternal rewards in the next life. Speaking the gospel to others in this life, even if it leads to suffering, is the choice for more joy, not for less. Eternal rewards are always better than any earthly pleasure.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:12 (ESV)

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Hebrews 11:26 (ESV)

When we present the gospel, some will always be drawn to it. Others will always oppose it. Some will violently oppose us because to them we are the odor of death. Speaking the gospel may result in mild persecution, such as friends leaving us, speaking against us on social media, or unfriending us on Facebook. In other countries of the world, that opposition could be far more violent as Islamic extremists seek to kill Christians who speak the gospel for others to hear. Mild persecution for speaking about Jesus or extreme persecution for speaking about Jesus, either way, it is a gracious privilege to suffer for the gospel, just as it is a gracious privilege to respond with faith to the gospel.

Conclusion

Paul said there was one thing he wanted the Philippians to know. He wanted us to know it as well. We must not just believe the Christian faith, but we must live the Christian life. We must live as worthy citizens of heaven. What does that look like?

1. We are soldiers that stand firm in one spirit against the attacks of the devil and the world. We do not waste our energy fighting one another. We stand firm with one another and support one another. If we waste our time fighting one another, we will be destroyed.
2. We are like athletes working together, striving for the goal. The goal is sharing the gospel in our community. God didn't design us to be rogue individuals sharing the gospel alone. He created us to work in unity as a team with each

one of us doing our part. In unity, working together, the gospel will make more progress than if we were working on our own.

3. We are not startled like horses in a panic at the first sign of spiritual opposition. We expect opposition to the gospel and know God uses that opposition as part of his good plan to spread the gospel.
4. Refusing to panic in the face of opposition is a two-way sign to the watching world. It is a sign to those who oppose us of their destruction. It is a sign to us of the authenticity of our faith. Only genuine Christians stick around when following Christ involves suffering. Those with fake faith scatter like cockroaches when the lights go on if speaking about Christ involves suffering.
5. Suffering for sharing the good news of Jesus is not as something to be avoided at all costs, it is a gracious privilege. Just as Jesus suffered for sharing the gospel in a world opposed to it, all Christians will suffer in some way for sharing the gospel because this world is opposed to it. Just as faith in the gospel comes as a gracious gift of God. Suffering for the gospel also comes as a gracious gift from God. There are many good things God does in our lives when we are willing to suffer for speaking about Jesus.

This week, I challenge you to live a life worthy of the gospel. Don't just believe the Christian faith. Live the Christian life. Refuse to be divided in the church by petty infighting over secondary matters. Work hard with your brothers and sisters in Christ, striving to spread the good news of the gospel in our community. Don't be frightened when people oppose us for speaking about

Jesus but consider it a privilege to suffer for speaking the gospel if that is the honor God calls us to embrace.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)



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